

# With Husted in the U.S. Senate, which Republicans are positioning themselves to be Ohio's next governor?

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COLUMBUS, Ohio—Following Jon Husted's appointment to the U.S. Senate, the Republican campaign for Ohio governor in 2026 is quickly shaping up to become a three-way race between ex-presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, Treasurer Robert Sprague, and Attorney General Dave Yost.

Each of the three is expected to roll out their campaigns soon, months earlier than past candidates have done in recent Ohio gubernatorial races. It's an indication of how wide open the race for Ohio governor is at this point -- especially now that Husted, long considered to be term-limited Gov. Mike DeWine's heir apparent, [is out of the picture](#).

The victor in the May 2026 GOP gubernatorial primary is expected to be the favorite to win the November general election, given Ohio's rightward turn in recent years. Dr. Amy Acton, the former state health director, is [the only Democrat to enter the 2026 governor's race](#) so far.

Here's more on Ramaswamy, Sprague, and Yost.

## **Vivek Ramaswamy**

Ramaswamy, a 39-year-old biotech entrepreneur from suburban Columbus, is widely expected to launch his campaign for governor in the near future.

Neither Ramaswamy's spokesman nor political consultants close to him returned phone calls for this story. However, Ramaswamy [posted on X earlier this week](#) that he will "have more to say very soon about my future plans in Ohio" and that a run for governor is ["not a bad idea."](#)

Ramaswamy shot to national prominence when he ran in last year's Republican primary campaign for president. While he dropped out after a fourth-place finish in

the Iowa Republican caucus, he won over many conservatives with a brash, energetic performance in primary debates, closely aligning himself with Trump (his nominal opponent) and both attacking and drawing attacks from other candidates.

Ramaswamy has backed many of Trump's proposals, such as deporting millions of illegal immigrants and [ending birthright citizenship](#). He has also [suggested](#) that the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol was an "inside job," [claimed falsely](#) that the 2020 presidential election was stolen by "big tech," and [asserted](#) that Democrats are intentionally trying to replace white Americans with minorities.

After Trump won reelection last November, he named Ramaswamy to co-chair a semi-official "Department of Government Efficiency" with billionaire Elon Musk. However, Ramaswamy is longer involved with the cost-cutting commission because of his interest in running for office, a spokeswoman with the initiative [told the Associated Press earlier this week](#).

Ramaswamy's name also belatedly popped up last week as Trump's reported favorite for the Senate appointment, though DeWine chose Husted instead.

Ramaswamy begins the race with good name ID, as well as a likely ability to capitalize on that name recognition to raise money. And if Trump decides to energetically campaign for Ramaswamy, that could make him unbeatable.

However, unlike his two rivals, Ramaswamy hasn't run for statewide office in Ohio before. And it remains to be seen whether he can turn his celebrity into votes when he hits the campaign trail.

"Vivek is someone (voters) saw on Fox News – someone they liked what he was saying, but they don't have any kind of personal relationship with him," to Barry Bennett, a longtime Ohio Republican political strategist who isn't supporting any of the three campaigns. "And that's what he's got to do in two years."

## **Robert Sprague**

Sprague, a 52-year-old resident of Findlay, in Northwest Ohio, said in an interview Wednesday that he's preparing to run for governor and that an official campaign launch is coming "soon."

The state treasurer isn't usually a household name in Ohio – the job mostly involves the important but mostly unheralded responsibility of managing state finances – and multiple Republicans said Sprague's odds of victory are, right now, behind

Ramaswamy or Yost. But Sprague has significant campaign experience, first as a state lawmaker, then as a two-term statewide officeholder.

If elected, Sprague said he would push a range of conservative reforms, including abolishing the state's income tax, getting Ohioans off government entitlement programs by making career training and an college education more accessible, generating more electricity by exploiting Ohio's oil and natural gas reserves, and do more to protect people of faith in Ohio.

"I think what gives me the advantage is that, first of all, I'm in it for the right reasons," Sprague said. "I'm not using this as a stepping stone to go anywhere else, but I'm not waiting in line either. I simply want to serve Ohioans and make our state a better place to live."

Bennett said Sprague – and Yost – have the advantage of being veteran campaigners who have spent years building relationships with rank-and-file Republicans around the state

"But I think that they both need to be bold -- think big, raise a lot of money, and go to every party event they can get to," Bennett said. "And that is hard work."

## **Dave Yost**

Yost has made no secret of his plans to run for governor, [altering his campaign paperwork accordingly in 2023](#) and [posting a social-media video](#) last November with not-subtle hints about his 2026 plans.

The 68-year-old Columbus resident is planning to fully roll out his campaign late next month, spokeswoman and senior advisor Amy Natoce [said last week](#).

Yost is a veteran of several successful statewide campaigns – first for state auditor in 2010 and 2014, then for attorney general in 2018 and 2022. As the state's top law-enforcement officials, he's regularly been in the news for anti-corruption and anti-crime efforts – a favorable publicity bump that state attorneys general usually get, as reflected in the old joke that "AG" stands for "almost governor."

Yost initially criticized Trump in the early days of the 2016 campaign ("his thirst for power at any cost makes him unfit for public trust," [Yost wrote on social media](#)). However, Trump endorsed Yost for reelection as attorney general in 2022, and the two now have an "excellent relationship," Bennett said.

The Ohio attorney general's office has filed legal briefs taking Trump's side in several cases -- [including Trump's assertion](#) that he has presidential immunity from prosecution for his involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021 storming of the U.S. Capitol and backing the president's review of U.S. immigration policies that allowed thousands of Haitian refugees to resettle in Springfield, Ohio.

Yost has also hired a former top Trump political adviser, Justin Clark, as a campaign consultant for the 2026 race.

In an interview, Clark said Yost's experience gives him an edge.

"Dave Yost is going to be the next governor of Ohio because he's a conservative fighter who knows the voters of Ohio better than anyone running, and who the voters of Ohio know and trust to fight for their conservative values better than anyone else running," Clark said.

Justin Buchler, an associate professor at Case Western Reserve University, said that, in political campaigns overall, the more experienced candidate usually wins. However, he added, that in a three-way campaign, that rule holds less often. "So it is possible for a candidate who would not otherwise get a nomination to get a nomination if you have the vote split in unusual ways," he said.